

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2023

Secretary Martin J. Walsh
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Secretary Xavier Becerra
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Secretaries Walsh and Becerra:

We write with renewed concern regarding the widespread use of child labor in U.S. manufacturing plants and urge you to take further steps to ensure companies are not illegally employing children.

Our children are our future, and we must be doing everything we can to protect them. We are concerned with new investigative reporting alleging migrant children are illegally working in factories across the United States for major corporations in the automotive, processed food and textile industries. This is unacceptable and must end immediately. Children should be in school, not working in dangerous factory jobs.

We appreciate the latest initiatives by the U.S. Departments of Labor (DOL) and Health and Human Services (HHS) to partner and use enforcement tools to combat child labor. However, we are frustrated by the lack of timely action. We ask your agencies to take additional immediate actions to stop child labor abuses.


Specifically, under the *Fair Labor Standards Act*, DOL can prevent the shipment of goods made in factories that are using illegal child labor, also known as “hot goods.” We encourage DOL to take aggressive and immediate action using this provision to stop products made while illegally employing children from entering interstate commerce. This will ensure companies do not profit from the sale of products made while using illegal child labor and encourage companies to scrutinize their supply chains more closely. We also need more proactive enforcement from the DOL. We can’t let the onus for enforcement fall most heavily on shoulders of children. Additionally, we urge DOL to pursue civil monetary penalties and criminal referrals against all companies that knowingly benefit from illegal child labor but believe that civil and criminal penalties must be raised through legislation.

Reports also show HHS is taking insufficient steps to ensure the protection of unaccompanied children released from its custody. In addition to recently announced actions, HHS must ensure that immediate follow-up happens when children request assistance regarding labor exploitation or the safety and security of their placement. We also urge HHS to expand post release legal and social services and ensure the information provided to children on reporting mistreatment are age appropriate and clearly communicated. While it is important to move children out of HHS’ custody, it is critical we do not subject children to the same dangerous circumstances they were fleeing.

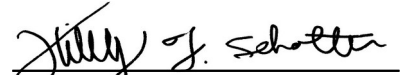
As Members of Congress, we are also committed to passing legislation that would increase penalties for those violating child labor law and other legislation to deter these abuses.

We look forward to your prompt action to address these issues.

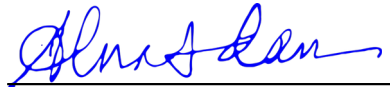
Sincerely,



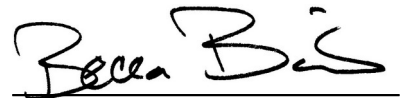
Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



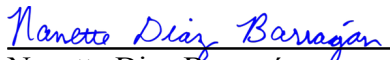
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Member of Congress



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Becca Balint
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
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Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



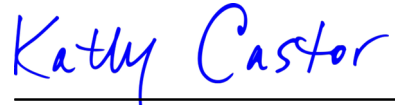
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



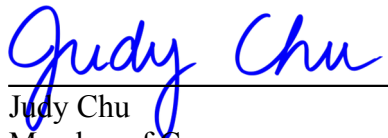
André Carson
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



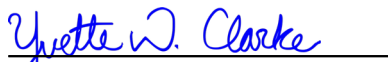
Kathy Castor
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Judy Chu
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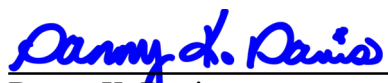
David N. Cicilline
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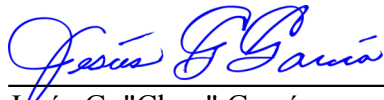
Veronica Escobar
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Adriano Espaillat
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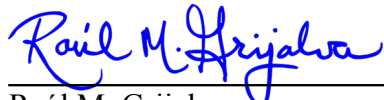
Dwight Evans
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



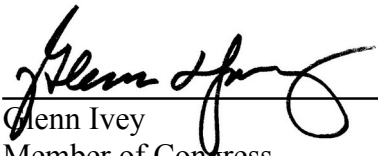
Al Green
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Jahana Hayes
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Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



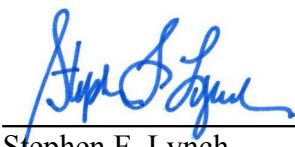
Pramila Jayapal
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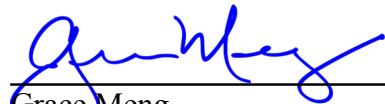
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Grace Meng
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Kevin Mullin
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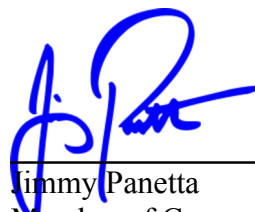
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



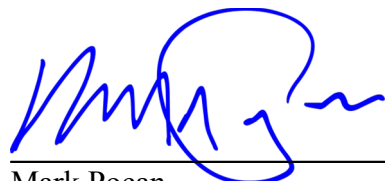
Ilhan Omar
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Jimmy Panetta
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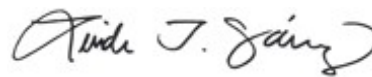
Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



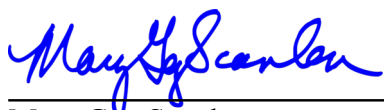
Mark Pocan
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho
Sablan
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Mary Gay Scanlon
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Jan Schakowsky
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Elissa Slotkin
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Dina Titus
Member of Congress



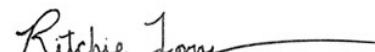
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



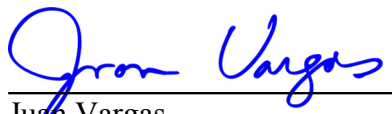
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



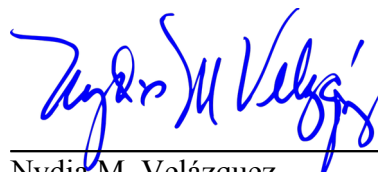
David J. Trone
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Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Nikema Williams
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